



United States  
Office of Personnel Management

# **DIGEST OF SIGNIFICANT CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS AND OPINIONS**

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## **Note to Readers**

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at [ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV](mailto:ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV).

Digest issues are also available on the Office of Personnel Management's website and electronic bulletin board. The website address is <http://www.opm.gov> and the electronic bulletin board is OPM ONLINE. Using a modem, dial OPM ONLINE at 202-606-4800. Long distance telephone charges may apply.

**Standard:** Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-0303, and Clerk-Typist Series, GS-0322

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Classification of positions which combine general office work with typing duties

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

Several agencies and Office of Personnel Management offices have requested guidance on determining the proper series for positions assigned general or nonspecialized clerical duties which are classified at a grade level higher than that appropriate for the assigned typing duties. While the classification standards for both the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-0303, and the Clerk-Typist Series, GS-0322, provide considerable information on determining series for clerical positions, the following supplementary discussion may be helpful.

### **Resolution**

General office work is procedural in nature and is characterized by the performance of such nonspecialized clerical duties as answering the phone; filing; opening and distributing the mail; carrying out simple and routine mathematical computations; processing documents, forms, or other paperwork; maintaining logs; or other similar duties which do not require specialized knowledge, experience, or training. General office work will rarely if ever exceed the GS-4 level.

While the grade-controlling duties will most often determine the series of a position, this is not always true. When general office work is combined with duties which require performance by a qualified typist, the typing skill determines the series. For example, many positions are assigned general office duties classifiable at GS-4 and typing duties classifiable at GS-3. When such a combination occurs, the position is to be placed in the Clerk-Typist Series even though that series does not represent the highest level of work performed. The Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series is not appropriate for such positions since the work is covered by the Clerk-Typist Series.

When specialized clerical duties are combined with typing duties, the appropriate series is either a specialized clerical series or the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series. Since the Clerk-Typist Series covers only general office work combined with typing, it is not appropriate for such positions. Clerical duties which are properly classified at GS-5 or higher nearly always require some kind of identifiable substantive knowledge and are specialized in nature even though sometimes the work may appear to be general office work.

**Standard:** N/A

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Grading of mixed-grade jobs in Federal Wage System.

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue was raised in an agency request for an Office of Personnel Management advisory opinion.

The issue relates to the guidelines in the Federal Wage System Job Grading System: Part I--Explanation of the Federal Wage System Job Grading System Part 1 of Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 512-1, Job Grading System for Trades and Labor Occupations, pages 10 and 11, for determining the grade level of "mixed jobs." A "mixed job" is defined as a job which "involves performance on a regular and recurring basis of duties in two or more occupations at the same or different grade levels." This definition specifies two or more occupations. The agency asked whether or not the guidelines apply also to mixed-grade jobs which involve performance of duties in only one occupation.

### **Resolution**

Neither Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 512-1 nor any other Office of Personnel Management Federal Wage System publication provides guidelines identified explicitly for determining the grade of mixed-grade jobs involving the performance of duties in only one occupation. Office of Personnel Management concluded that the above guidelines apply equally to all mixed-grade jobs, including those involving the performance of duties in only one occupation.

The above conclusion applies also to the "mixed job" guidelines in Subchapter S6-5 of Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 532-1, page 37, and Subchapter S6-5 of Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 532-2, page 37.

In applying the guidelines, all the criteria should be carefully applied. There is no specified percentage-of-time requirement for duties controlling the grade of the job. However, special care should be exercised if the percentage devoted to the highest-grade duties is low (e.g., 15 percent). In this case there is a greater tendency to make the following errors: (1) crediting duties which are not repetitively performed on a continuing basis and, therefore, should not be credited in any way; (2) incorrectly assuming that the duties require the full range of work and qualifications necessary to warrant the grade being considered; and (3) incorrectly assuming that the duties are

performed under normal supervision for the grade being considered when they are performed under closer supervision and, therefore, overgrading the job.

**Standard:** N/A

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Factor Evaluation System: Use of related standard for factor extrapolation

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in the Office of Personnel Management's processing of a position classification appeal requiring the application of a Factor Evaluation System standard.

The appellant contended that his position should be evaluated at Level 1-8 of Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position, because the standard directly applicable to his position did not include a factor level above Level 1-7 and the language in Factor 1 of his position description closely paralleled that in Level 1-8 of the Primary Standard. The issue is whether or not the appellant's suggested evaluation approach is adequate.

### **Resolution**

In comparing the appellant's required knowledge with Level 1-8 of the Primary Standard, the Office of Personnel Management noted that his position description included some descriptive terms identical to some of those in Level 1-8. The Office of Personnel Management then compared his required knowledge with Level 1-8 of a related Factor Evaluation System standard and found that his required knowledge fell significantly short of that level. Considering and weighing *together* the comparisons with the Primary Standard and with the related standard, the Office of Personnel Management concluded that the appellant's required knowledge did not fully meet the intent of Level 1-8, and therefore, in accordance with the Factor Evaluation System instructions applicable to this situation, the Office of Personnel Management credited Level 1-7.

The Office of Personnel Management's application of the related standard in the above manner needs an explanation in view of the following prohibition from on page 6 of the Instructions for the Factor Evaluation System: "Factor levels from different FES standards may not be used in evaluating one set of duties and responsibilities." This is a general prohibition, but there is an exception prescribed on page 7 applicable to the specific situation described above. The exception provides that after the selection of a factor level by comparison with the Primary Standard, the following comparison should be made: "Compare the same level of a related FES standard (if available) to the position factor being evaluated to assure that they are equivalent in terms of overall intent." This means that the Primary Standard and the related standard (if available) should be used and considered together for this specific purpose.

Coordinated application of the general criteria of the Primary Standard and the specific criteria of the related standard, which should be more closely oriented to the work of the position being classified, provides the most reliable and fair means for evaluating a factor above or below the coverage of the directly applicable standard.

**Standard:** Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part II

**Factor:** Factor I, Base Level of Work Supervised

**Issue:** Conversion of local national positions to  
General Schedule equivalents

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in the Office of Personnel Management's processing of a position classification appeal.

In evaluating supervisory positions, credit must sometimes be given for supervised positions which are not classifiable in the General Schedule. The general principle is that such positions are credited based on their equivalent classification by reference to General Schedule standards. Confusion may arise when the supervised positions have titles identical to those found in General Schedule standards.

The situation was as follows. The highest level of line work in the organization was represented by positions classified under a local national system as Criminal Investigators, levels 14 and 16. The agency installation equated these positions to those included in the GS-1811 series and credited the work at GS-9 and GS-11. Its evaluation of the Division Chief's position was accordingly accomplished using Part II of the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide.

### **Resolution**

The Office of Personnel Management found that the local national positions were not equivalent to positions properly included in the GS-1811 series. There was a separate organization at the installation which handled all felony cases. The investigations conducted by the local national positions were for minor crimes such as traffic violations, petty thefts, assaults not involving great bodily harm, domestic squabbles, possession of illegal drugs for personal use, etc. Such investigations are identified with the Police Series, GS-0083, and were found to substantially match the description for Detective at the GS-7 level. The proper standard for evaluation of this portion of the Division Chief's work was the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part I.



**Standard:** Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part II

**Factor:** Factor II, Nature and Extent of Supervisory Responsibility

**Issue:** Supervision of military positions GS-0460

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**This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.**

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**Standard:** Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part II

**Factor:** Factor III, Managerial Aspects

**Issue:** Evaluation of supervision of staff program  
development work GS-0460

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